

Basic Detail Report



Mask

Date

late 20th Century

Primary Maker

Asaro

Medium

Mud

Description

A mud mask collected from the Wahgi Valley in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. The Asaro “Mudmen” are well known for ghoulish clay mask and eerie dance ritual. These clay masks, like the one presented here, are fairly large and heavy made from mud. Once dried the mud turns to an off-white in color. The shape of the mask is helmet-like and bulbous with a carved wide human face. There are large holes around the mask for the ears, mouth, eyes and nose of the wearer. The mask also features puncture holes around the eyebrows and pointed cheeks. According to Asaro legend, early tribesmen were defeated by a rival tribe in combat and were forced into the Asaro River. They waited until dusk to rise from the muddy banks covered in clay, and returned to their village not knowing the enemy tribesmen were still there. The enemy was so terrified of their ghost-like appearance they fled in terror.

Dimensions

8 × 10 1/2 × 12 1/2 in. (20.3 × 26.7 × 31.8 cm)